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ABSTRACT

This document contains the reports of two studies concerning the graduates of the University of Minnesota Technical College (UMTC) at Crookston. The first report analyzes the results of a survey of all graduates (1966-72) and of 1972 graduates in particular. It was found that most of the graduates were employed; of these, 82 percent were employed in fields they had prepared for at the college, and 88 percent were employed at the mid-management or semi-professional level. Most of the graduates had remained in rural areas, 66 percent in communities of less than 10,000 and 30 percent in communities of less than 2,000. The report concludes that UMTC can be considered accountable in that its main mission is to prepare individuals for future employment at the mid-management or semi-professional levels in agricultural and related fields and to prepare them for service to rural communities. The second report discusses the results of a survey of the opinions of the employers of UMTC graduates. Results indicate that employers rated the college highly in terms of preparing graduates for jobs, that UMTC graduates compared very favorably with other employees, that a substantial number of graduates had been promoted since their initial hiring, that males were promoted more often than females, and that approximately 99 percent of the employers would hire other UMTC graduates. (DC)

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Follow-Up and Evaluation of Graduates in Minnesota Collegiate-Technical Education

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Placement follow-up and evaluation of graduates has long been an integral part of occupational and technical education. With today's emphasis on accountability, at no other time in the history of education is data on the outcomes of the institution more necessary. As written by Johnson and Shafer (1970) the student is a product of the "knowledge industry." Thus, placement and accountability are highly related if one views student outcomes as a viable part of accountability. Such a concept requires the acceptance and implementation of goals for student outcomes by those within the institution. Popham (1969) wrote that the most important deficiency in American education is the preoccupation with the instructional process. Thus, there is the implication that after a thorough analysis of outcomes, modification of procedures and instructional process will have more meaning.

In 1966, a new concept appeared in Minnesota higher education, the University of Minnesota Technical College in Crookston. Collegiate-technical education is conceived by the institution as that education which contains two-thirds of its programmatic courses in technical education and one-third in general education. This two-year college has shown steady growth in enrollment since its inception and a sister institution, the University of Minnesota Technical College in Waseca has started. It is an appropriate time to evaluate the outcomes of the Minnesota collegiate-technical education concept.

Process

For the purpose of this study and because of the newness of the college at Waseca, only the technical college at Crookston was analyzed. According to the college's testimony statement for the Minnesota Senate Education Committee (1973), the chief mission of the college is to prepare individuals for future employment at the mid-management or semi-professional level of employment in the broad fields

related to the food and fiber industry, as well as services to rural homes and communities. Approximately one-half of the college's 750 students major in agriculture with the rest scattered in various related majors (Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Management, Business, or Home and Family Services). It would appear that student outcomes in relation to the college's mission statement could be construed as follows:

1) Are the graduates obtaining positions in their prepared-for career paths? (Majors and programs within the college's curriculum are consistently within the broad fields related to the food and fiber industry.)

2) On the basis of salary, are the graduates progressing within their prepared-for career paths after they obtained their initial employment?

3) Is there evidence of a commitment to rural America in terms of student outcomes? For example, are students obtaining employment in rural communities? It should be noted that through programs, workshops, courses, etc., the college has attempted to demonstrate its commitment to rural service.

To answer these and other questions, the University of Minnesota, Crookston student affairs staff conducted a survey in which all of its graduates through 1972 (N=476) were requested to complete a questionnaire designed to obtain information about:

1) The graduates present occupational status.

2) The positions, job title, employers, and salary patterns of the graduates.

3) The relationship between the preparation the graduates received at the college and their present jobs.

4) The population of the community that the graduates work in or near.

In addition, the college placement office conducted a survey intended to query every 1972 graduate (N=105) to secure information about:

1) Their occupational status.

2) Their source of employment (if employed).

3) The community they had secured employment (if employed).

Questionnaires concerning all graduates were completed by 55% of them in Spring, 1973. The study concerning the 1972 graduates reached 100% of them.

Results and Discussion

Sixty-nine percent of the 1972 graduates went into immediate employment, 25% transferred to four-year institutions, with the rest either entering military service, getting married, or transferring to an institution of higher education that is less than a four-year college (1). The part of the study concerning all graduates revealed that 80% of the responding graduates were employed while 14% were presently attending another institution of post-secondary education.

It was evident that the college was meeting its stated goal in terms of graduates obtaining positions within their studied-for career paths as 93% of the 1972 graduates that chose to enter the labor market were employed in the field they had studied. Although one out of every three graduates had changed jobs, it was found that 82% of the total graduates were still employed in the career path they had prepared for at the college. Approximately one-third of the migration from the prepared-for career area occurred within the Natural Resources field. This might be explained from the facts that the Natural Resources field is traditional lower paying and opportunities for advancement are somewhat limited. According to job titles, it appeared that only 12% of all graduates were not employed at the mid-management or semi-professional level.

According to the data pertaining to salary, the average initial salary of the University of Minnesota, Crookston graduate was $6,259. This was deemed acceptable by the college after considerating the facts that (1) the sample included many 1968 and 1969 graduates, (2) the college is comparatively young and just beginning to acquire a reputation, (3) 18% of the sample was female, and (4) many of the graduates were employed in rural settings. Progress within the career path was indicated by the fact that the average graduate at the time of the study was making $8,259 per year, an increase of approximately $2,000. Male graduates were making almost $3,000 more per year than were female graduates at the time of the study.

It should be noted that the graduates perceived a strong relationship between the education they had received at the college and their present jobs. For example, 35% described this relationship as high while 8% described it as little and 22% indicated it as very high as compared to 7% who indicated it as none. The remaining graduates indicated there was some relationship between their education and their present position.

According to information secured from the college Admissions Office, 54% of the 1972-73 students admitted to the college came from communities of less than 2,000 people, 79% from cities less than 10,000, and only 2% from cities with 50,000 or more persons. Thirty percent of all employed graduates were in communities of less than 2,000, 66% were in communities of less than 10,000, and 19% were in communities of over 50,000. Seventy-seven percent of the employed 1972 graduates remained within Minnesota with one-half of those who left the state employed in eastern North Dakota. On the basis of these data, it is evident that this college is fairly successful in placing its graduates within rural areas.

In summary, collegiate-technical education in Minnesota can be held accountable in terms of student outcomes. Students who come from rural areas find positions in the career paths they prepared for at the college, and the large majority of these positions are in rural America.*

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Employer Evaluations of Graduates in Minnesota Collegiate-Technical Education

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A study previously reported analyzed employment patterns of graduates of the University of Minnesota Technical College, Crookston, and concluded that collegiate-technical education in Minnesota is accountable in terms of student outcomes. Approximately one-half of that college's student major in agriculture with the rest distributed in various related majors (hotel, restaurant, and institutional management; business; or home and family services). It was found that students who came from rural areas obtained positions in the career paths they had prepared for at the college and the large majority of these positions were in rural America. The previous study also presented data which indicated graduates were making satisfactory progress according to salary in their career paths.

The data in the aforementioned study was obtained from the graduates of the University of Minnesota, Crookston. Yet, a significant question remained unanswered: What was the employer's reactions to graduates of technical-collegiate education? This study attempts to answer that question.

The primary objectives of the present study in regard to employer's evaluations are as follows:

1. How well did employers feel the college had prepared the graduates for jobs?
2. How did employers rate technical college graduates in comparison to their other employees?
3. Had the graduates been promoted since the employer initially hired them?

4. Did employers substantiate that after the initial hiring the graduates had progressed in salary?

5. Would employers hire other technical college graduates?

To answer these and other questions, the University of Minnesota, Crookston surveyed all of the employers of its graduates (1968 - 1973) who were known to have entered the job market after graduation (N=402). Naturally, those graduates who entered occupations where they were their own supervisors, such as agricultural production, were eliminated from the study. Questionnaires were returned by 72.4%. However, in some cases because of graduates changing jobs, or supervisors changing jobs, or because of company policies, some questionnaires (N=34) were returned uncompleted. Thus, 61.7% (N=258) were completed and analyzed in the study.

Results and Discussion

When asked to disregard personal characteristics of the graduates they hired, employers rated the college preparation for the job in the following manner:

A. Excellent - 18.8%

B. Good - 57.7%

C. Fair - 10%

D. Poor - 1.7%

E. Can't evaluate - 11.7%

Employers rated male and female graduates very similarly in terms of the college preparation.

Employed technical college graduates compared very well to other employees according to employer ratings. In terms of quality of work, 63.5% of the graduates were rated superior or above average and 32.1% were considered average. Ratings concerning quantity of work and the employees verbal, reading, and arithmetic were similar and also quite high. In all three categories, less than 5% rated the graduates below average. Again, male and female graduates were rated very similarly

Table 1 depicts the employer's ratings of the graduates they hired in terms of the specific characteristics:

TABLE

EMPLOYER'S RATINGS OF THE GRADUATES THEY HIRED
IN TERMS OF THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Superior	Above Average	Average	Below Average
Ability to direct others	6.7%	26.4%	50.0%	16.8%
Ability to accept criticism and improve	13.2%	41.9%	33.6%	11.2%
Cooperation with others	23.4%	41.3%	31.3%	4.0%
Ability to work without supervision	20.6%	43.7%	28.1%	7.6%
Accepts responsibility	22.8%	45.2%	26.1%	5.8%
Acceptance of company policies and philosophy	19.9%	43.2%	30.5%	6.4%
Possesses potential for professional growth	21.0%	43.6%	27.1%	8.3%

Very slight differences were noted in employers ratings between male and female graduates.

In comparing the salary data concerning female and male graduates, it was obvious that females got substantially less money ($150 per month) than males upon their initial hiring from their present employer, and less money in terms of raises. For example, after two years of working males received an average raise of $220 per month compared to $110 per month for females. Male graduates, on the average, continued to receive substantial raises after each year of employment (4 years - $330 per month, 5 years or more - $480 per month). The number of women working for their present employers after two years was too small to draw conclusions. It should be emphasized that this data does not take in account those graduates who had entered occupations in which they were their own boss, such as agricultural production or those graduates who entered the labor market after 1973.

Interestingly, although over 70% of the sample had worked for their present employer for less than 3 years, approximately 35% had been promoted since their initial hiring. As might be expected, more males (38%) than females (25%) had been promoted since their initial hiring.

Perhaps the most critical issue was the question posed to employers: "If you had a job available, would you hire other technical college graduates?" Ninety-eight percent of employers who had hired males responded with yes as did 100% of those who had hired females.

In summary, employers rated the technical college very high in terms of preparing graduates for jobs. Likewise, according to employers, technical college graduates compared very favorably to their other employees. A substantial number of graduates (35%) had been promoted since their initial hiring. Although both males and females were progressing satisfactorily in salary since their initial hiring, males were progressing much faster. Approximately 99% of the employers, if they had jobs available, would hire other technical college graduates.

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